

Community Garden Program and Policy Needs 2016



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Context: Community Gardens in Austin



What is a Community Garden?

A community garden is "any piece of land gardened by a group of people" *-American Community Gardening Association*



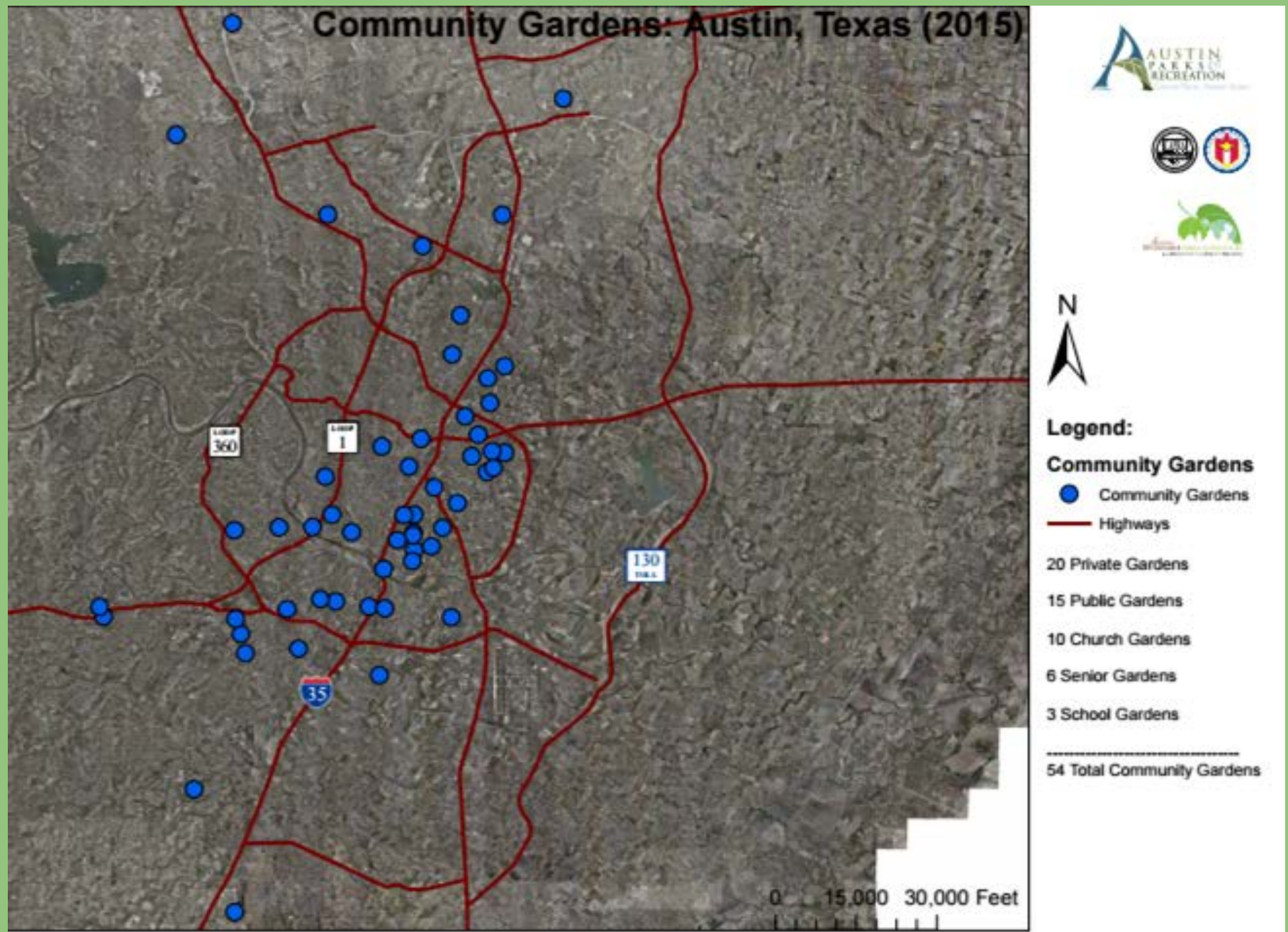
Benefits of Community Gardens

- Re-engage people with their food
- Provide spaces created BY the community for people to learn to grow food, enhancing community stewardship and pride
- Provide access to affordable, fresh, local, culturally appropriate, nutritious food
- Foster friendships and cooperation across racial, socioeconomic, and age groups
- Empower citizens to relate with local governments



All this around food and health—common to all.

54 Community Gardens in Austin



Existing Community Gardens in Austin

- Gardens are on City, County, State, church, school, and private land.
- Gardens are under a variety of land use agreements, including license agreements, Parkland Improvement Agreements, and private land use agreements.
- Most gardens on City land have a waiting list (some with over a year wait). There is a growing demand for community garden space.
- Most gardens are managed by volunteer participants.
- Most gardens have plot rental or membership fees to cover water and other costs

Gardens on City Land

14 Community Gardens, 403 community plots total

6 Senior Gardens, 62 senior plots total

COMMUNITY GARDENS	Address	Total Plots
Deep Eddy Community Garden (est. 1983)	300 1/2 Atlanta Drive 78703	34
Clarksville Community Garden (est. 2004)	1705 Waterston Ave., 78703	23
Blackshear Community Garden (est. 2008)	2011 E. 9 th St., 78702	14
Homewood Heights Community Garden (est. 2008)	2606 Sol Wilson Ave, 78702	12
Festival Beach Community Garden (est. 2010)	35 Waller St., 78702	98
Gus Garcia Community Garden (opened 9/2013)	1201 E. Rundberg Ln, 78753	28
North Austin YMCA Community Garden (opened 3/2014)	1000 W. Rundberg Ln, 78758	48
Asian American Resource Center Intergenerational Garden (opened 9/2014)	8401 Cameron Road, 78754	10
Adelphi Acre Community Garden (opened 4/2015)	3701 ½ Adelphi Ln, 78759	90
Cherry Creek Community Garden (opened 4/2015)	5618 Bayton Loop, 78745	24
Downtown Austin Community Court Garden (opened 11/2014)	842 Springdale Road, 78702	for community service only
Emerald Wood Community Garden (construction)	S. 1 st & Emerald Wood, 78745	14
Kenny Dorham's Backyard Community Garden (construction)	1106 E. 11th, 78702	8
Patterson Park Community Garden (solarizing/construction)	4200 Brookview Rd., 78722	under development
	TOTAL COMMUNITY PLOTS	403
SENIOR GARDENS	Address	Total Plots
South Austin Senior Activity Center (est. 2012)	3911 Manchaca Rd., 78704	16
Virginia L. Brown Recreation Center (est. 2013)	7500 Blessing Ave, 78752	8
Gus Garcia Recreation Center (est. 2013)	1201 E. Rundberg Ln, 78753	10
Pan American "Cantu" Recreation Center (est. 2013)	2100 East 3 rd St., 78702	8
Dottie Jordan Recreation Center (garden opened 9/2014)	2803 Loyola Lane, 78723	8
Conley-Guerrero Senior Activity Center (garden opened 3/2015)	808 Nile St., 78702	12
	TOTAL SENIOR PLOTS	62

Advocacy Work by Coalition of Austin Community Gardens (CACG)

The mission of the CACG is to facilitate the creation of **more community gardens** in the Greater Austin Metro Area. We strive to **foster stability** and **land security** for existing gardens, and to help them to become more **vibrant, diverse places**.

Identified barriers to community gardening, made policy recommendations to SFPB in 2009.



www.communitygardensaustin.org

Policy Progress, Barriers, and Priorities for Action



Progress Assessment of Original Community Garden Policy Goals

- Using 2009 CG advocacy goals, revisited each policy need and determined 2016 status:
Complete, In Progress, No Action
- Full progress assessment on separate document for your review

Excerpt below:

Community Garden Advocacy Update	
Original Goals:	Progress to Date: Complete, In Progress, No Action
Amend City Code to support CG development and allow a CG anywhere within City of Austin to be designated as a Qualified Community Garden	<p>In Progress: Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens Program established within PARD. Completed: SUACG Program can permit "qualified community gardens" through application and permit coversheet.</p> <p>In Progress: 2009 Sustainable Food Policy Board Recommendation led to 2009 City Council Resolution supporting sustainable urban agriculture and community gardening: ***RESOLUTION NO. 20091119-065</p> <p>2011 City Ordinances Passed to Support Community Gardens: ***Application and License Agreements: ORDINANCE NO. 20110210-017 ***Site Plan Exemptions: ORDINANCE NO. 20110210-018 ***Water Meter and Tap Waivers: ORDINANCE NO. 20110210-019</p>

Barriers: SUACG Program Staffing

RECOMMENDATION

“Estimated fiscal impact was calculated by the City Budget Officer to be \$859 from PARD per each community garden request (34 hours of staff time from an **Administrative Senior, Planner II, Program Coordinator**, and a **Landscape Architect**) plus 40 hours of staff time for an **Engineer Associate C** who could work with the sustainable food group. The fiscal impact of adding necessary PARD program staff was \$90,000 for salary and benefits for two new full-time FTEs (one Administrative Senior and one Program Coordinator).”

- *Fiscal Memo from Ed Van Eeno, City Budget Officer, as back-up to City Council Resolution 20091119-065*

Barriers: SUACG Program Staffing

CURRENT STATUS

- Lack of City of Austin Community Garden Program staff capacity
 - Only 0.5 FTE Program Coordinator is funded within PARD
- Lack of support from additional staff in key departments
 - CG assistance should be in job descriptions of relevant staff, as originally indicated by City Council ordinance back-up documents
 - Assistance with community garden process is interpreted as not part of regular job duties by other city staff, contributing to delays in process
- Need for project manager
 - Project management/permitting for new gardens and program management for existing gardens are distinct roles

Improvement of ADA-accessible bed at Festival Beach Community Garden, May 2016



Barriers: Water & Land Permits

CURRENT STATUS

- In spite of waived water tap installation fees, establishment of **water infrastructure** is a convoluted and lengthy process:
 - Water tap plan is cost prohibitive and requires hiring engineer
 - Water meter application process is confusing for gardeners
 - Irrigation requires hiring master plumber
- **Site plan exemption** process requires professional site plan despite platting exemption outlined in City ordinance
- **License agreement** process and fee is prohibitively convoluted and long
 - New Travis County Clerk's Office Recordation Fee
- Lack of process for **donating land** to City for use for sustainable agriculture

Barriers: Need for Equity & Food Access Lens

- **Lack of funding:** Community Garden program has no budget to assist community with fees, organization/community outreach, material resources
- **Sponsorship limitations:** Liability insurance requirement & indemnification clause in license agreement prohibitive to most nonprofits interested in sponsoring CGs
- **Lack of prioritization for garden assistance:** Existing CGs in Austin serve a limited geographic area, especially in low income/low food access areas, and efforts & funding need to be prioritized accordingly
- **Lack of City staff training** to support program gardens, especially for recreation centers

Priorities for Action

1. **Increase staffing** for SUACG program by 0.5 FTE to restore staffing to 1.0 FTE as recommended by Council and City staff, and add 0.5 FTE for additional support, for a total of 1.5 FTE
2. **Incorporate community garden support** into relevant City staff job descriptions, as originally estimated by Fiscal Memo in 2009
3. **Further streamline Community Garden Process** to minimize delays, permitting burdens, and financial burdens to community members
4. **Fund SUACG program** in order to pay necessary fees and improve equity and access through increased capacity for technical assistance to underserved communities
5. **Train City programming staff** to utilize existing and future program gardens at City facilities

Thank you!/Questions?

